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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 30 March 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat of the United Nations

The Permanent Mission of Cameroon to the United Nations presents its compliments to the United Nations Secretariat and has the honour to inform it that the Government of Cameroon has decided to present the candidature of Cameroon for re-election to the Human Rights Council at the election to be held in May 2009.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, the Secretariat will find annexed hereto Cameroon's declaration of pledges and commitments relating to its re-election to the Human Rights Council.

The Permanent Mission of Cameroon would be grateful if the Secretariat could circulate the said document.

The Permanent Mission of Cameroon to the United Nations takes this opportunity to convey to the United Nations Secretariat the renewed assurances of its highest consideration.

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 30 March 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat of the United Nations

[Original: English and French]

Candidature of Cameroon to the United Nations Human Rights Council

Statement of commitments

Cameroon, deeply committed to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national, as well as the regional and international levels, has been a member of the Commission on Human Rights and played an active role in the creation of the Human Rights Council.

Cameroon's commitment to human rights is reflected in the establishment of an appropriate legal and institutional framework and the adoption of measures that guarantee the respect of human rights. It is in this regard that fundamental rights are incorporated into the constitutional instrument and that the Constitution facilitates the integration of conventions into domestic laws by providing precedence over national standards. Consequently, the main human rights conventions to which Cameroon is a party at the international level (the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women etc. ...) and at the regional level (the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Protocol establishing the African Court of Human Rights etc. ...) have precedence in national laws and regulations.

At the institutional level, Cameroon has an independent judiciary and a Constitutional Council whose structures are being set up progressively. The National Commission on Human Rights, established in 1990, was transformed into the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms in July 2004 so as to ensure better compliance with the Paris Principles. A Department of Human Rights and International Cooperation was also created in the Ministry of Justice by a decree of 15 April 2005. This Department is responsible for monitoring human rights issues in general, monitoring the implementation of international conventions on human rights; providing information and sensitizing staff of judicial services and the prison administration on standards of human rights protection. Finally, it should be noted that in 2005 the prison administration was attached to the Ministry of Justice and a Special Division in charge of Police Control created.

Cameroon is co-initiator of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the headquarters of which is also in Cameroon. Cameroon cooperates with this Centre in the promotion of human rights in the subregion.

Since 2006, Cameroon has taken relevant measures to fulfil the commitments it made during its election into the Human Rights Council.

I. Implementation of the 2006 Statement of Commitment

For its election to the Human Rights Council in 2006, Cameroon took the commitment to carry out the obligations contained in the constitutive resolutions of the Human Rights Council and to:

- Work to ensure the effectiveness of civil, political, social and cultural rights, including the right to development;
- Cooperate to this end with regional organizations, national human rights bodies and the civil society;
- Work through dialogue and cooperation for the effective enjoyment and reinforcement of human rights;
- Pursue its efforts to ensure total compliance with international legal instruments on human rights;
- Cooperate fully with the United Nations Member States, and especially with those of the Human Rights Council, so that this new body effectively performs the duties arising from its missions and in accordance with the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity;
- Work tirelessly to ensure the credibility of the Human Rights Council.

To this end, Cameroon has:

(a) Worked towards reinforcing protection and promotion of:

- Civil and political rights: by organizing transparent and democratic elections, implementing decentralization, arresting and prosecuting elements of the forces of law and order guilty of violations of human rights (administrative and judicial sanctions were taken against 47 elements of the forces of law and order, from all the corps, just for the year 2006), ensuring the effective entry into force in 2007 of the new Criminal Procedure Code, which contains provisions that reinforce the protection of human rights, notably the right to a fair trial, improvement of detention conditions and the organization of education campaigns for human rights whose primary purpose is to assist in instilling a culture of human rights in Cameroon.

At the international level, Cameroon signed in 2007 the International Convention against Forced Disappearances and in 2008 the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At the national level, an independent body responsible for organizing and monitoring elections, Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) was created and in December 2006, a law to organize the judiciary was passed.

- Economic, social and cultural rights including the right to development: the recovery of the national economy, reflected in the adoption of budget measures for streamlining public finances had as the main objective the improvement of living conditions of Cameroonians. In this area, the Government placed special emphasis on social sectors such as education, health, youth employment, in terms of improving the quality of supply in these areas.

In order to address the problem of unemployment and the precarious nature of young people, the Government of Cameroon initiated a far reaching programme of

recruitment into the public service. Since the launch of this recruitment exercise, 18,800 part-time teachers of general education in 2007 and 5,825 in 2008 were absorbed into the Cameroonian public service. Also falling within this framework, is the authorized recruitment of 1,000 lecturers in State universities, the absorption of 10,000 temporary staff and the admission, by competitive entrance examination, of about 4,500 youths in the fields of diplomacy, health, computer sciences, statistics, civil engineering and the military.

In 2006, Cameroon adopted two important instruments aimed at improving national governance and management of public affairs. These are: Law No. 2006/3 of 25 April 2006 on the Declaration of Assets and Decree No. 2006/88 of 11 March 2006 to establish the National Anti-corruption Commission.

(b) Cameroon has remained committed to the promotion and realization of the right to development, which it considers, in accordance with the Vienna Declaration, as a value equal to other rights.

(c) Cameroon has cooperated with the United Nations, other regional organizations and civil society to ensure the promotion and respect of human rights: in 2006, Cameroon submitted its periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and in 2008, it finalized and submitted its periodic reports to all other organs of the human rights treaties to which it is party. It defended, in January 2009, its report before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Following correspondence G/SO 214 (53-21) of 4 September 2007 of the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on torture, Mr. Manfred Nowak, correspondence which contained a number of recommendations and observations, the Government of Cameroon provided some answers on the level of implementation of the Convention against Torture in its legal system. An invitation was also extended to Mr. Ambeyi Ligabo, Special Rapporteur on the promotion of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in May 2008, and to Amnesty International. Cameroon made efforts to reply to communications, questionnaires and urgent appeals directed to it by various special procedures.

(d) In the process of preparing its reports, the Government involved the civil society and thus maintains a constant link with it in the promotion and protection of human rights as concerns in particular specific rights.

(e) Cameroon provided support to the Human Rights Council for it to carry out its mission. In this regard, it took part in all regular and special sessions of the Council and in the deliberations of the Advisory Committee. It was a member of the troika of four countries and was itself subjected to the periodic universal examination on 5 February 2009.

2. New commitments of Cameroon

During its second term of office in the Human Rights Council, Cameroon is pledging to continue its efforts for the promotion and defence of human rights. It will work towards attaining the following objectives:

(a) To be a party to major international instruments on human rights in which it is not yet participating, notably:

- Endorse the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: one on trafficking, trade and child pornography and the other on children in armed conflicts;

- Endorse the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;

- Ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention on the Protection of Persons against Forced Disappearances and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention against Discrimination in Education.

(b) Promote the rights of women by:

- Fostering programmes aimed at improving the status of women;

- Adopting legislation against female genital mutilation and the organization of awareness campaigns against this practice;

- Taking into account the observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in order to ensure that women actually enjoy all their rights;

- Pursuing efforts already made towards combating all forms of discrimination against women.

(c) Take action to strengthen the protection of children's rights by:

- Taking into account the rights of the child in programmes designed to improve on the living conditions of the people;

- Implementing recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on children without shelter;

- Preventing child trafficking and child labour and improving on measures of protecting victims;

- Improving on the treatment of minors in places of detention.

(d) Boost efforts already made in the area of prison administration by:

- Ensuring that places of detention meet international standards;

- Facilitating access to prisons to national and international humanitarian organizations;

- Accelerating reforms of the penitentiary system, including the construction of new prisons;

- Strengthen the independence and authority of the national judicial system;

- Respecting the rights of detainees.

(e) Guarantee within available resources the economic, social and cultural rights, mostly the:

- Right to health: intensifying HIV/AIDS control programmes and reinforcing the health system as a whole;

– Right to education: Cameroon will continue with its efforts aimed at improving on the quality of education, providing free primary education and improving on the implementation of the Plan of Action of the World Programme for Education on Human Rights;

– Fight against corruption and improve on governance.

(f) Continue with actions aimed at promoting the respect for civil and political rights, especially freedom of the press, transparency of elections, including the provision of sufficient resources to ELECAM, the national election managing body.

(g) Reinforce measures to guarantee and protect the rights of minorities, the disabled and other vulnerable groups.

(h) Intensify Cameroon's action to promote peace, preserve ecosystems within the subregion, through greater involvement in peacekeeping operations, on the one hand, and subregional structures for the protection of the environment and promotion of sustainable development (Central African Forests, the Lake Chad Basin Commission etc. ...) on the other hand.

(i) Work with the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms and civil society to improve the general situation of human rights in Cameroon and to popularize human rights culture.

(j) Enhance Cameroon's cooperation with treaty bodies and special procedures and continue to work with other Member States for the credibility of the Human Rights Council.